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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 6948

SEPT 26

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY: CONVERSATIONS WITH [redacted]

1. FOLLOWING POINTS EMERGED IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES [redacted] MEMBERS OF OPPOSING LISTS IN KHANH HOA PROVINCE:

2. BOTH MEN EXPRESSED OPINION THAT ASSEMBLY SHOULD AND WOULD FINISH ITS WORK IN SHORTER PERIOD THAN SIX MONTHS ALLOWED BY ELECTORAL DECREE. [redacted] POINTED TO YOUTH

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AND VIGOR OF ASSEMBLY, CLAIMED THAT MAJORITY OF MEMBERS AGREED THAT THEY SHOULD GET ON WITH JOB AND FINISH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. "PEOPLE" WANT CONSTITUTION, WILL DISTRUST DEPUTIES IF ASSEMBLY DRAGS ITS FEET.

3. [redacted] WAS ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO ARTICLE 20 OF ELECTORAL DECREE, ACCORDING TO WHICH TWO-THIRDS VOTE OF ASSEMBLY NEEDED TO OVERRIDE AMENDMENT OFFERED BY GVN. CLAIMED THAT THIS AMOUNTED TO RULE BY "ONE-THIRD PLUS ONE", AND FELT ASSEMBLY WOULD SEEK TO CHANGE PROVISION. [redacted] LESS BOTHERED BY ARTICLE 20, AND SEEMED SOMEWHAT MORE INCLINED TO ACCEPT GVN ROLE IN ASSEMBLY'S DELIBERA-

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TIONS. ON OTHER HAND, SENSITIVE TO WHAT HE CONSIDERS WIDELY HELD BELIEF OF CIVILIAN DEPUTIES THAT MILITARY (AND CIVIL SERVANT) MEMBERS CONSTITUTE GVN TOE-HOLD IN ASSEMBLY, IMPUGNING INTEGRITY OF BODY. STRESSED HIS OWN INDEPENDENCE, AND THAT OF HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES.

4. DOES NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY BECOMING LEGISLATIVE BODY. IN HIS VIEW, SUCH A TRANSFORMATION DEPENDS PRIMARILY ON WHETHER DRAFT CONSTITUTION ALLOWS IT. IN AN EARLIER (PRE-ELECTION)

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CONVERSATION, SAID THAT HE FAVORED ANOTHER ELECTION FOR LEGISLATIVE BODY.

5. BOTH MEN FAVOR PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FOR VIET-NAM, BUT STRESS NEED FOR ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS ON PRESIDENTIAL POWER IN ORDER TO AVOID EXCESSES OF DIEM REGIME. THERE SHOULD BE SEPARATION OF POWERS, WITH INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FULLY CAPABLE OF CRITICIZING GOVERNMENT.

6. DID NOT SPECULATE ABOUT WHAT BLOCS MIGHT EMERGE IN ASSEMBLY, BUT BELIEVES THAT THERE WILL BE SUFFICIENT UNITY OF VIEWPOINTS TO ALLOW DRAFTING OF CONSTITUTION TO PROCEED APACE. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, IN OPINION, WILL BE LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO REGIONAL OR RELIGIOUS INFIGHTING THAT WILL FUTURE LEGISLATIVE BODIES. HOWEVER, SAID THAT DURING SEPTEMBER 21 MEETING OF II CORPS DEPUTIES HOSTED BY MAJ. GEN. VINH LOC IN DALAT, HE AND OTHER MEMBERS HAD LOBBIED FOR CREATION OF DE FACTO II CORPS BLOC. HE IMPLIED THAT II CORPS DEPUTIES WOULD NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES BE TIED TO ANY OF COMPETING GROUPS IN SAIGON, BUT WOULD SEEK TO DEAL IN ASSEMBLY FROM POSITION OF REGIONAL STRENGTH.

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7. REGIONAL SOLIDARITY SPOKEN OF BY APPARENTLY FOSTERED BY GENERAL VINH LOC IN DALAT MEETING MENTIONED ABOVE. ACCORDING TO SEPBEMBER 24 ARTICLE IN TU DO, VINH LOC, SPEAKING IN AN "ERNEST VOICE", TOLD ASSEMBLED II CORPS DEPUTIES THAT "FROM NOW ON WE WILL ESTABLISH A

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BLOC TO STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHTS OF II CORPS". HE WENT ON TO EXPRESS HOPE THAT THE 28 II CORPS DEPUTIES WILL BE AS "IMPERIAL GUARDS", PROTECTING II CORPS INTERESTS IN ASSEMBLY. VINH LOC ALSO STRESSED NECESSITY FOR STRONG GOVERNMENT, AND STATED THAT ANY GOVERNMENT, WHETHER OR NOT ELECTED, MUST HAVE COOPERATION AND TRUST OF MILITARY IF IT IS TO LAST. COMMENTING ON POSSIBILITY OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY BECOMING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, VINH LOC TOLD DEPUTIES THAT "IF PEOPLE ARE SATISFIED WITH YOUR WORK, THEY WILL SURELY AS YOU TO CONTINUE". FOLLOWING DALAT MEETING, DEPUTIES BOARDED AIRPLANE FOR TRIP TO SAIGON.

8. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF YOUTH AND INEXPERIENCE OF MAJORITY II CORPS DEPUTIES, IT QUESTIONABLE WHETHER EFFECT OF VINH LOC'S REGIONALIST PEP TALK WILL BEAR UP FOR LONG UNDER PERSUASIVE PRESENCE OF BIG-TIME SAIGON POLITICIANS.
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